

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
September 19 & 20, 2006**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9 A.M., on September 19, 2006, in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Ford, Ed Barnes, Bob Distler, Elmira Forner, Carol Moser, Dan O'Neal and Dale Stedman.

MINUTES APPROVAL

It was moved by Commissioner Forner and seconded by Commissioner Barnes to approve the meeting minutes of August 16 & 17, 2005, July 18 & 19, 2006 and July 26, 2006 Ellensburg local meeting minutes as amended by Commissioners Forner and Moser. The motion passed unanimously.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary MacDonald discussed various issues that are forefront, such as the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the 520 Bridge project options. He noted that the Department is focusing on public outreach and the draft environmental impact statements on both projects. Of major importance is how these projects will be built and paid for. The Department is working with the Regional Transportation Investment District on details and project costs. He pointed out that there are program evaluation tools that can be used to describe different kinds of projects in objective ways. The Secretary and the Commission discussed long-range forecasts, operating expenses and various other issues. In closing the Secretary expressed that the fundamental issue is the continued problem of generating investment in the transportation system and express concern that the more time that passes the greater the cost.

EXPERT REVIEW PANEL (ERP) REPORT

Barbara Gilliland, ERP Administrator and Rod Brown, ERP Member (Cascadia Law Group), provided an overview of the panel's report. Mr. Brown emphasized that the panel was tasked with reviewing the assumptions underlying the Alaskan Way Viaduct and SR 520 projects, he emphasized that they were not asked to make recommendation on a choice. He also shared that two *official* alternatives for the viaduct were looked at; the cut and cover alternative and replacement of aerial structure. The report explains that the ERP strongly believes the plans are fundamentally sound and achievable. The report also provides recommendations in several areas for moving forward with project planning and into construction in the most effective manner. It is believed that additional deliberation is extended much further inflation will diminish the purchasing power of the funds that have already been committed. Meanwhile, the existing viaduct and bridge will continue to deteriorate and inch closer to catastrophic failure. If these projects are to succeed, the people in positions of elected and appointed authority must make decisions that stick, so the projects can be completed. The ERP urges political leaders and stakeholders to decide the best path forward and then proceed on that path swiftly.

DOT STRATEGIC PLAN

Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff and Daniela Bremmer, Director, Strategic Assessment, WSDOT, explained that the Department's guidance from the Governor's Office for the next biennium budget submittal is to work closer on the alignment of Priorities of Government (POG), agency strategic plans and budget submittals in order to capture performance measures and benchmarks in order to bring them together into consistent measures.

Ms. Bremmer briefly explained trends in gas tax revenues and the driving forces behind the Department's operating environment. She touched on key areas that will influence the Department's operations and program delivery. To view the Department's 2007-2011 Strategic Plan please visit:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/publications/StrategicPlanWEB.pdf>

RAIL STUDY INTERIM REPORT #2

Sophie Hartshorn, Cambridge Systematics Inc., highlighted the progress since the last Commission update. She explained that the benefits/impact methodology development is meant to be used to evaluate program policies or specific actions/projects, determine the conditions under which the State will participate in the private rail sector, and determine the State's level of participation in a private sector action and evaluation of future projects/programs and actions at the State level. Commissioners discussed the impact of rail projects on the State's economy as well as associated industries. Also discussed at length were the *draft* guiding policy statements. To view this presentation please visit: <http://www.wstc.wa.gov/Rail/RailStudyInterimReport2.pdf>.

REVIEW FINAL WTP FOR POSSIBLE ADOPTION

Commissioner Stedman, Lead, WTP Team, opened the presentation with an overview of the timeline for adoption of the 2007-2026 Washington Transportation Plan (WTP).

Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, Policy Development & Regional Coordination and Judy Lorenzo, Statewide Policy Planning Manager, Strategic Planning and Programming, WSDOT, presented the final WTP for review and adoption. The Executive Summary of the WTP provides an overview of how the plan connects us to families, friends, neighbors, jobs and communities. The transportation plan also reflects on the key to economic development, connecting businesses with customers and suppliers. Washington is the most trade dependent state in the country, and its transportation system links it to the global economy. The Commission's vision for the transportation system is that it should serve our citizen's safety and mobility, economic productivity, our communities' livability and our ecosystem's vitality. This transportation plan is focused on moving people and goods, regardless of travel mode or public or private ownership of transportation systems. It moves away from the historical practice of taxing and building our way out of congestion to satisfy the demands of growth. This 20-year transportation plan warns that as we grow, we must grow smarter and be more innovative.

Commissioners and staff held discussion regarding corrections that need to be addressed in the Plan before actual adoption can take place.

It was determined that the Commission revisit the revised draft of the Plan at the October 2006 Commission meeting and consider adoption of the finalized document at the November 2006 Commission meeting.

FINAL TOLLING STUDY REPORT

Jeff Buxbaum, Project Manager, Cambridge Systematics, Inc., explained that the intention of the Tolling Study has been to create a process that facilitates the state's ability to make policy level decisions on if, where, when and how to toll. Top-level findings show that tolls are a proven tool for funding large projects, and with today's technology there are new opportunities for tolling. The State cannot build its way out of traffic congestion, and congestion pricing has proven effective elsewhere in the U.S to make the most of existing facilities. The final step is Legislative action to carry out the Commission's proposed policy. He moved on to provide an overview of the role that tolling can play in developing and managing the State's transportation system and the use of toll revenues. In general the public's attitude towards tolling is one of conditional acceptance, because it generates apprehension, and because of its complexity there is fear of abuse, fraud and writing a blank check.

It was moved by Commissioner O'Neal and seconded by Commissioner Ford to approve the adoption of the final Tolling Study Report. The motion passed unanimously.

TNB TOLL FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

David Pope, Toll Systems Manager, WSDOT, explained that toll collection will begin when the new bridge Tacoma Narrow's Bridge opens in the Summer of 2007. He provided an overview of six toll rate scenarios that includes a discount for electronic toll payment (Good To Go) as defined by the Legislative budget proviso to provide incentive to electronic toll users. The discussion included the previous base assumption and alternative scenarios, and maintaining the cash/electronic toll difference, the discount duration and possible increased cash rate to offset discounted Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) revenues. The Department's toll staff will work with the Tacoma Narrow's Bridge Citizens Advisory Committee and the Commission in two workshops in order to provide the Commission with sufficient data to set toll rates on the TNB by early 2007.

Commissioners discussed various elements of the proposed toll discounts, and expressed concerns regarding the ability to stay on schedule to pay off the debt service, and operations and maintenance on the bridge. Chair Ford suggested that there would be value in offering a discount as an incentive to encourage the public to utilize the ETC. The Commission suggested various toll combinations and requested that different scenarios be provided by the Department for review. Commissioner Distler suggested that certain additional alternative, hypothetical tolling scenarios be included for further analysis along with those presented by the Department.

PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD

Paul Locke, citizen, shared his concerns regarding toll setting on the Tacoma Narrow's Bridge.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Barnes reported that on a recent trip across the country he looked at various rail lines, road conditions and toll highways.

Commissioner O'Neal shared information regarding the status of the Rail Study.

Commissioner Forner shared that she recently attended an RTPO/MPO quarterly meeting where she acquired information on land use and the Growth Management Act.

Commissioner Moser shared that Railex recently had its first trial run, and everything went smoothly.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Reema Griffith, Executive Director, WSTC, presented the Commission's by-laws for approval.

It was moved by Commissioner O'Neal and seconded by Commissioner Moser to approve the by-laws. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Griffith also presented Commission agency request legislation. This legislation will add a new section to Chapter 47.01 that provides for the Commission the authority to name or re-name state transportation facilities including but not limited to: state highways; state highway bridges, structures and facilities; state rest areas; and state roadside facilities such as view points.

It was moved by Commissioner Ford and seconded by Commissioner O'Neal approval and to proceed with the transmittal of the legislation. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m., on September 20, 2006.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DICK FORD, Chair

ELMIRA FORNER, Vice-Chair

EDWARD BARNES, Member

CAROL MOSER, Member

DAN O'NEAL, Member

ROBERT S. DISTLER, Member

DALE STEDMAN, Member

DOUGLAS MACDONALD, Ex-Officio Member
Secretary of Transportation

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL